DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 328 057 FL 018 903

AUTHOR Gold, Lonny
TITLE Suggestopedia: Activating the Student's Reserve Capacities.
INSTITUTION California Univ., Santa Cruz. Bilingual Research Group.; National Council of Suggestology, Paris (France).
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 22p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Classroom Environment; Classroom Techniques; *Cognitive Processes; *Curriculum Design; Foreign Countries; Grammar; Instructional Effectiveness; Language Attitudes; Language Teachers; Language Tests; Music; Postsecondary Education; Role Playing; Second Language Instruction; Student Attitudes; *Suggestopedia; Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

An article on the suggestopedic method for adult second language instruction describes the learning processes emphasized in the method and outlines the instructional processes used. The approach is based on the creation of a pleasant, relaxing, and stimulating environment where all information has positive emotional content, and uses subconscious programming of both student perceptions and course content. General and specific examples are given. The structure of a suggestopedic course for adults is described, including the physical environment of the classroom, scheduling of lessons and activities, student adoption of new identities for the duration of the course, the text and its distribution, and content of the dialogues. One dialogue is presented for illustration. Phases of student contact with the text are outlined, including: (1) the "activate concert" phase, during which the text is presented to the accompaniment of classical music, followed by a day of activities and games that emphasize communication; (2) the "passive concert," during which the student just listens as the teacher again reads the text to the accompaniment of classical recordings; and (3) the adaptation phase, with emphasis on aural comprehension, written comprehension, and written expression. The functions of testing and grammar are examined briefly, and the teacher's role is analyzed. (MSE)

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Suggestopedia: Activating the Student's Reserve Capacities

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LONNY GOLD
of Trajectoires-Associées, and The National Council of Suggestology,
149, rue Saint-Honoré
75001 Paris
Tél. : 33 (1) 42.60.35.20

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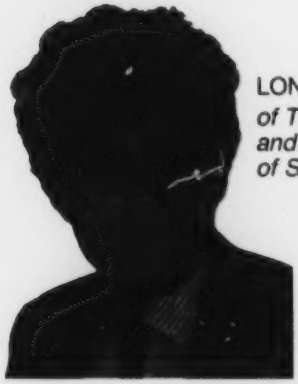
Suggestopedia: Activating the Student's Reserve Capacities



LONNY GOLD
of Trajectoires Associées, and The National Council of Suggestology, Paris

LONNY GOLD has taught some 60 one-month long Suggestopedic language courses since 1978. He was trained at the Ecole française de Suggestopédie where he stayed for 5 1/2 years before creating, in 1984, Trajectoires Associées, a non-profit making society that promotes Accelerative Learning both in Europe and America. He is both author and co-author of teaching material, and is at present working on a new type of teacher transformation programme as well as on applications of Suggestopedia to the field of tourism.

This article first appeared in the July 1985 issue of "Forum" and has been revised for this booklet with the kind help and encouragement of Mr. Peter O'Connell.

Most of us are familiar with the proverb "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." Most of us have also come to realize that it is possible to teach and teach until doomsday, but this does not necessarily result in learning. Ultimately, we all find ourselves face to face with the Grand Question of Questions: "What, in fact, makes students actually learn?"

For twenty-five years, a Bulgarian doctor and psychiatrist, Georgi Lozanov, has been studying the link between perception and learning. The result is a new approach to teaching based on new insights into how the human mind really functions. The fruit of Lozanov's findings is a teaching system called Suggestopedia. After ten years of using this approach and experimenting with its tenets, I am convinced of its effectiveness, and would like to share, with other EFL teachers, some of my enthusiasm.

Emotions, memory, and self-image

Suggestopedia holds that the starting point in all learning is the student's deep-rooted attitude to the subject matter and to her/himself. By creating a pleasant, relaxing, and stimulating environment, where all information has a positive *emotional* content, the teacher can help students to create networks of pleasureable associations with the new material and thus to remember it longer. (E.g., learning the Present Simple through paying compliments to each other: "I love your beige shoes," "You always dress beautifully," etc.).

In recalling the enjoyable classroom situation — and people love hearkening back to situations where they felt good — the key phrases and expressions used or heard will, in all likelihood, spring to mind. Surprised by their newly discovered ability to remember spontaneously, students quickly develop more positive expectations of themselves and their learning capacities. Delighted by the ease with which they have mastered the subject matter, they will find their motivation and enthusiasm spiraling in accordance with the principle that "nothing succeeds like success."

Conscious control of subconscious attitudes

A second way in which a teacher can help learners tap the resources of their mental reserves is the careful programming of what they will perceive on a *paraconscious* level (i.e. what they will see without realizing they have seen it).

Since at every moment the human mind perceives much more than it is aware of, the amount of information we store subconsciously is astounding. For example, the colour of the hat worn by a woman you sat next to on a bus last year, or the words to a song you heard once when you were a child. Dr. Wilder Penfield demonstrated this by stimulating the cortex of a patient

undergoing brain surgery with an electric needle while the patient was under local anaesthetic.[1]

This sort of information *of weak intensity* is constantly slipping into our minds without our realizing it, at speeds our cognitive processes could never keep up with.[2] Our attitudes toward people, subjects, and things are largely determined by these subliminal perceptions that find their way *directly* to our unconscious mind. For example, an otherwise perfectly convincing sales pitch by a life-insurance salesman could fall flat because at the moment he is "moving in for the kill" with a sob story about his poor mother who was left destitute, the prospective customer catches him furtively glancing at his watch. In the event that the salesman is experienced, his glance might be so quick, and thus so barely perceptible, that it would not be consciously recognized by the customer until several hours later. During this time of "incubation", the customer may well feel uncomfortable and distrustful without knowing why.

Perceptions of this kind *do not get reinterpreted for our conscious minds before being stored;* those that finally reach the surface and become conscious do so at some later time, in the form of *intuitive flashes* or *dreams*.

In a teaching situation, what a student perceives subliminally will condition her/his receptiveness, confidence, and creativity. According to the "micro-messages" s/he picks up from the teacher's facial expressions, body language, voice intonations, dress, bearing, punctuality, warmth, sensitivity, desire to communicate, etc., students will tend to open up or close down — usually without even realizing that they are doing so.

Consequently, for effective learning to take place, teachers must master both the perceptible and imperceptible planes of communication, and prepare their classes on *both* levels.

A few examples of how best to use the "imperceptible" plane of communication:

a. In giving out texts to be studied, give out *long* (but not necessarily difficult) ones. This suggests that the subject matter is easy and that the students are highly capable. All anxiety is avoided as the target language has a parallel translation in the native tongue. Relieved of the fear of not understanding, the students are favorably disposed to the text, and "a good beginning is half the battle."

b. Always correct *indirectly*, with the emphasis on communicating, not on grammar. A typical example:

Student: He gone to Canada.
Teacher: He went to *Canada??*
Student: Yes, he went with my sister.

1. See the works of Dr. Wilder Penfield of the Montreal Neurological Institute.

2. Visual perception, for instance, operates through neurons connecting the eye and the brain at a speed of 60 to 100 meters per second (Wilson Bryan Key, *Subliminal Seduction*, New York: Signet, 1974, p. 50), and it has been estimated that the eyes make 100,000 fixations daily (Key 1974, p. 20).

(Often the student does not realize s/he has been corrected, but starts using the correct form to speak the way the teacher does. The kind of situation that could cause a student to feel embarrassed and close down psychologically is thus avoided.)

c. Camouflage all repetition, as repetition could mean that the student's pronunciation is inadequate, that the structure is difficult and must be worked hard at, or other negative suggestions. The following procedure is an alternative to mechanical repetition.

Let us suppose the teacher is "drilling" "*What's your* name?" "*What's your* occupation?" etc. He divides the class into two groups for pair work. The members of one group are hotel receptionists; of the other, guests checking in. When the "receptionists" have asked all the "What's your ——?" questions, and the "guests" have answered all these questions, the teacher, before getting everyone to change roles, will add a *new element:* this time, the receptionists are hard of hearing. In the new situation, amid howls of laughter and much shouting, the repetition is camouflaged.

Subconscious programming of course content

Subconscious programming by the teacher, however, is not restricted to the psychological conditioning of a student's attitude. If a teacher hopes to enable students to outdo their usual learning performance in terms of speed, thoroughness, and retention, s/he will have to subconsciously program the *course content* itself.

Before embarking on a theoretical explanation of how the subconscious programming of course content can stimulate spontaneity and activate creative reserves, it might be judicious to give general and specific examples of ways in which the subliminal level of communication can be exploited.

General Examples

a. Wall charts with linguistic material such as irregular verb forms or the word order in questions, etc., which hang unobtrusively among other posters without the students' attention ever being specifically drawn to their presence. (These charts can be left up for three to five lessons and then be replaced by other charts with new linguistic material.)

b. The singing of songs — almost all of which contain relevant grammar structures — for the sheer enjoyment of singing them, without analyzing them.

c. Language games where students move about the classroom in such a way that different movements and different places serve as memory aids for different words, structures, and idioms.

Specific Examples

a. To teach the Present Simple: Stand, or sit, all students in a circle, or

circles, of nine to fifteen people (depending on the size of the class). The first student, to whom the teacher has given a playing ball, states what he likes. For example, he announces, "I like cheeseboxes." He then throws the ball to another student in the circle, and this second student states: "John likes cheeseboxes, and I like children." The third student on receiving the ball, will say: "John likes cheeseboxes, Mary likes children, and I like chocolate ice cream." This accumulation game, which starts becoming lots of fun at about the seventh or eighth person, has the merit of completely sidetracking students from the real object of the exercise. Usually they are so surprised at being able to remember the order in which their classmates received the ball, and the object they must associate with each classmate, that they do not give the Present Simple a second thought. They just use it — correctly — *without thinking*.

b. To teach *There* is and *There are:* Pass around a tray. Have each student put a personal object on the tray. Some will contribute pens and keys, while others will give more original things such as whistles, nail files, etc. Give students 30 seconds to study the contents of the tray, and then cover it up. In pairs, have them list off to each other, orally, the hidden objects. Once again, they will be so intent on recalling the objects that their correct use of "There*'s a* stamps" and "There *are* three coins" will only catch their attention *peripherally*.

c. To have students re-read a text: Give them some pleasant, but extraneous, task to do, such as finding their favorite sentence on every page. That way, with their conscious attention occupied elsewhere, the actual subject matter will only be perceived on a *peripheral* subsensorial level.

The usefulness of subconscious routing.

Readers may by this time be wondering why so much trouble is being taken to "package," in a systematic manner, important material for the imperceptible, subsensorial, subliminal level of perception.

The imperceptible, subsensorial, subliminal level of communication is an equal partner in the learning process. It has its own specificity. In by-passing our conscious attention, data coming through this channel activates *long-term memory* because it passes directly from the external world into our unconscious memory bank before percolating through to our consciousness where if will remain. These "realizations," or intuitive flashes, come from within, often taking us by surprise. Many great scientific inventions are cases in point. Information perceived subliminally thus follows a trajectory unlike that of direct information. The latter passes through the filters of our conscious and rational mind, soliciting our attention and *short-term memory*, remaining at our disposal for about three days before starting to fade away,[3] thereby making room for more recent input that must be dealt with.

3. Georgi Lozanov, *Suggestology and Outlines of Suggestopedy* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1978), pp. 210-13.

The exploitation of our long-term memory possibilities through the well-planned landscaping of the "imperceptible" is really the pedagogical application of a Pavlovian principle. Pavlov held that in certain "paradoxical states" a dialectical process of activation-inhibition takes places. This state is characterized by the inhibition of certain conscious functions — the rational volitional aspect of the personality — and the activation of the intuitive, subconscious part of the personality. This state of greater receptivity usually corresponds, physiologically, to slower breathing, a change in the electrical rhythm of the brain, fewer heartbeats per minute, and a slight drop in body temperature.

In this state, the mind protects itself from what are for it, at that moment, overly strong stimuli by inhibiting its own reactions to them, through its psychological defenses. Conversely, in this paradoxical state, the mind is particularly receptive to what are for it, at that moment, weaker stimuli. Pavlov's conclusion is that, in this particular state, *strong stimuli produce weak reactions while weak stimuli provoke strong reactions.*

Most of use are familiar with this phenomenon in our everyday lives. For example, on receiving the news of a death over the telephone, it is possible to feel numbness rather than pain. This is a case in point of inhibition. Conversely, someone who is drifting off to sleep, when the phone rings, can experience it as a fire-alarm bell, and panic.

In her/his role of "perceptual engineer," a suggestopedic teacher will create a relaxing, fun-loving, and stimulating classroom atmosphere where students are generally more receptive and open, and then present course material in such a way that some aspects of it are readily perceptible strong stimuli, while other aspects of the same material are "embedded" weak stimuli.

It should perhaps be pointed out that effective use of subliminal communication is only possible in the suggestopedic classroom so long as its use reflects the teacher's appreciation of how indissolubly linked the "conscious" and "unconscious" minds are in the "whole personality", and consequently in the learning process. The teacher must understand how essential *harmony* is between, on the one hand, the verbal, rational, cognitive, analytical, critical, and volitional aspect of the personality, and on the other hand, the nonverbal, emotional, intuitive, synthetic, artistic and spontaneous aspect of the personality.

When, through the mastery of both planes of communication, a balance is struck such that all aspects of the overall personality of the student are being appealed to and stimulated, learning can be rewarding and the results impressive.

Perhaps the time has now come for a description of a suggestopedic course.

STRUCTURE OF A SUGGESTOPEDIC COURSE

The "suggestopedic classroom" for an oral language class should ideally be a large bright room with windows and natural daylight, carpeted with twelve or fourteen upholstered reclining armchairs in a semi-circle. The teacher sits in a similar chair in the open part of the semi-circle; there are a flip chart and a small table with stereo equipment beside or behind him/her.

The atmosphere in a suggestopedic classroom is one of club-like congeniality that contrasts sharply from the traditional classroom with rows of desks, hard floors, blackboards and chalkdust. Pictures on the walls, flowers on the table and soft lighting suggest relaxation, comfort and success, and avoid associations with any negative memories of school.

A suggestopedic course is highly structured. The diagram that follows is of a typical first week:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
First day entry exams to determine levels	Activation phase of Lesson 1	Adaptation phase of Lesson 1. An easy test (last five minutes)	Activation phase of Lesson 2.	Adaptation phase of Lesson 2. An easy test.
BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK
Role distribution. Presentation concert to classical music of Lesson 1. Decoding session. Light music.	Activation phase (one hour). Relaxation concert (1/2 hour)	Presentation classical concert of Lesson 2. Decoding session. Light music	Activation phase (one hour). Relaxation concert of Lesson 2 (1/2 hour)	Presentation classical concert of Lesson 3. Decoding session. Light music.

Most suggestopedic language courses for adults are spread over four or five weeks, and are held five days a week, three and a half hours a day (in actual fact, two one-and-a-half-hour sessions, with a 30-minute break between them).

Each new lesson is first presented during the *second* one-and-a-half-hour session of the day, and every lesson lasts a total of four one-and-a-half-hour sessions. In this way, the first session every day is always a carryover from

the previous day, and all new material is introduced when the students are already "warmed up."

Eight or ten specially written dialogues constitute the framework of the course. These tell the story of twelve or fourteen people who are gathered together to participate in a humanistic venture of one sort or other. Themes that have been used include a congress on "Man and Nature," a convention on "Communication between People," and a "Contributions to World Civilization" exhibition.

All twelve or fourteen characters have been made attractive in every way. They are intelligent, sensitive, civic-minded, socially successful, and professionally prominent. They are the kind of people most of us would like to be, as adults. To foreign students, they are credible American or British models of what they would like to become.

Use of new identities

During the entire four- or five-week period, each student will play the role of one of the characters in the dialogues. They will be known to their classmates only in their new suggestopedic identity.

This "mask" represents a break with the past and all previous, unsuccessful learning experiences; it allows students to become people they have never let themselves be before. This makes it easier to overcome learning blocks based on unfounded, preconceived, stereotyped notions of how limited their capacities are.

The text-distribution "ceremony"

At the beginning of every new lesson, the teacher distributes copies of the dialogue about to be presented, as if these were deeply meaningful gifts. The students usually respond to this suggestion that the manual is a pleasureable as well a useful part of the course with a smile and a "Thank you".

Every page is divided into two, with the target-language text on the right and the "simultaneous" native-language translation to the left. This layout is the result of perceptual research findings, according to which the human eye — at least in countries where people read from left to right — has a tendency to focus on the right-hand side of the page. Consequently, with this layout students can at any time have recourse to the translation, but naturally "gravitate" toward the language being learned.

Each dialogue is surprisingly long. While this might seem discouraging to an outside observer, it is actually highly stimulating to the student, whose reaction is: "They've given me a lot: it must be easy for me."

This is the first tangible proof students have of the suggestopedic teacher's confidence in their ability to use their reserve capacities to absorb as never before. It is a perfect example of a positive suggestion, which, like a self-fulfilling prophecy, inevitably bears itself out.

The teacher may give a quick, even expeditious, rundown of the main grammar points to be met, and/or a dialogue summary of the different adventures about to befall our twelve characters (and hence, the group, since, in our classroom reality, each participant is one of the characters).

The content of the dialogues

Some suggestopedic manuals (i.e., the specially written dialogues) follow a traditional grammatical progression, while others are more "functional-notional" in approach. Some spread the grammar out evenly over the entire course, while others load up the first part of the curriculum with almost all the new grammar, reserving the last two weeks of the course for the assimilation of what has already been presented, for new exploitations of this material, and for the introduction of more vocabulary and idioms. In short, as far as specific linguistic content and progression is concerned, there would appear to be as many different schools of thought within the world of Suggestopedia as there are in the entire field of teaching.

From a psychological point of view, however, suggestopedic manuals single themselves out from other manuals. In addition to being lively and particularly rich in linguistic content, the story line and situations have all been thought out to avoid triggering negative reactions that cause students to "turn off".

All of the adventures that the students find themselves embarked on are pleasant or humorous, nonthreatening, and even naive. There are some obvious taboos: airplane crashes, bank robberies, suicides, and other situations suggestive of disaster and failure. Suggestopedic texts however go even further: they stay clear of anything that seems disorganized, irrational, unpredictable, or unethical.[4] In this way, Suggestopedia tries to do everything possible not to set into action the natural defenses that students (like any other human beings) have, which protect them from the outside world when it appears to jeopardize their well-being.

Some critics, mindful of students' ability to cope with conflict situations in the foreign language once they are in the real world, may feel that Suggestopedia does not prepare its students for the harshness of real life by giving them the functional-notional expressions to convey anger, discontent or fear.

These registers of language are in fact taught and practised, but in nonthreatening and light-hearted role plays. Expressions of anger and frustration can be simulated in little sketches. For example, an irate customer in a bookshop may be complaining bitterly because the book salesman is unwilling to sell him a pair of shoes.

What teachers refer to as "learning blocks", and what students experience as a vapid, empty numbness that overtakes them, are in fact defense mechanisms. These mechanisms are usually imperceptible, and aim at pre-

4. Examples will be given below.

serving the student's mental balance and ability to function, by insulating her/him against input that is disturbing.

Disturbing input, when it meets with resistance, generally does so because it has awakened, and run headlong into, one of the following three barriers: *(a)* THE CRITICAL-LOGICAL BARRIER, which can reject the illogical and the disorganized; *(b)* THE INTUITIVE-AFFECTIVE BARRIER, which can reject the dangerous and the painful; *(c)* THE ETHICAL BARRIER, which can reject the immoral and unprincipled.[5] Concrete examples of what to avoid:

a. Disorganization. This refers to both the presentation of the linguistic material and the story itself. When manuals convey a lack of clarity, planning, or direction, students will feel a lack of confidence, and it is difficult to be both distrustful and receptive at the same time.

b. Illogicality. When someone in the story walks in the door, the student expects him to say "Hello". When he does say "Hello," the student feels good, because s/he has been able to predict a predictable target-language utterance.

If, on the other hand, the person walks in and says, "What's the price of herring?" or "I warned Gertrude not to put her hair curlers in the freezer!" students will, at worst, be bewildered and discouraged, and, at best, be in awe of the writer's wit and talent rather than of their own intelligence for having figured the system out.

c. The "Morally Questionable". Notwithstanding frequent surprises, as well as good-natured jokes and tricks that the characters play on each other — all of which make for a joyful, childlike, spontaneous atmosphere — it could never dawn on anyone in the manual to do anything dishonest; none of the characters could ever have malicious intent.

Controversial subjects such as divorce, birth control, and sex (before, during, and after marriage!) are never broached in the manual.

To sum up, suggestopedic texts have a seemingly rational structure and logical development, are wholesome, high in cultural content, and psychologically reassuring. They try to avoid all causes of anxiety, and attempt to bring out the "creative, playful child" in each student. In fact, they actively encourage companionship good humour and positive feelings.

As a picture is worth a thousand words, an example of one kind of suggestopedic passage follows. The *dramatis personae* in this scene are:

- Lou Abatucci, humour columnist from Tucson
- Barbara Parker, arts editor from Darlington
- Ron Potter, archeologist from Boston
- Eileen Simon, finance editor from Yellowknife (Canada)
- Lawrence Ward, science co-ordinator from Morriston (Wales)
- Heather Wells-Teller, editor-in-chief from Melbourne

5. Lozanov, *Suggestology and Outlines of Suggestopedy*, pp. 163-69.

RIRA BIEN QUI
RIRA LE DERNIER

Mercredi 1er Avril, 1987
(Le jour du Poisson d'Avril)

DANS UN AUTOBUS

Alice a loué un car pour emmener tout le monde à une présentation de mode. Ils partent pour la Salle d'Exposition sur le Quai des Pêcheurs.

R.P.: Quelle ville!

E.P.: Je suis amoureuse de San Francisco.

L.W.: Les rues sinueuses et les hôtels particuliers de l'époque victorienne.

H.W.: Leurs teintes pastel atténuées, encadrées de couleurs vives.

R.P.: Et leurs intérieurs majestueux, meublés du mobilier ancien le plus raffiné.

B.P.: Un monde à part des copropriétés de Los Angeles.

E.S.: San Francisco est un mélange hors du commun de buildings, d'habitations individuelles vieillottes-fantasques et d'une beauté naturelle.

L.W.: Et les couchers du soleil sur le Pacifique!

L.A.: Ces collines me donnent le vertige.

E.S.: Son désert d'Arizona manque à Lou.

L.A.: Ne me comprenez pas de travers. J'adore être ici. A part les «crémaillères» et les tremblements de terre, je me sens tout à fait chez moi ici.

B.P. Ne t'en fais pas: depuis 1907, les bâtiments d'ici sont résistants aux tremblements de terre.

HE WHO LAUGHS LAST
LAUGHS BEST

Wednesday, April 1, 1987
(April Fools' Day)

ON A BUS

Alice has chartered a bus to take everybody to a fashion show. They set out for the Exhibition Hall on Fisherman's Wharf.

R.P.: What a city!

E.S.: I'm in love with San Francisco.

L.W.: The winding roads and Victorian mansions.

H.W.: Their subdued pastel shades trimmed with bright colors.

R.P.: And the stately interiors furnished with the most exclusive antique furniture.

B.P.: A far cry from the condominiums in Los Angeles.

E.S.: San Francisco's an outstanding mixture of high-rise buildings, quaint private dwellings, and natural beauty.

L.W.: And the sunsets over the Pacific!

L.A.: These hills make me dizzy.

E.S.: Lou misses his Arizona desert.

L.A.: Don't get me wrong. I love being here. Except for the cable cars and earthquakes, I feel very much at home here.

B.P.: Don't worry: since 1907, the buildings here have been earthquake-proof.

A few general observations

a. The *identities* (i.e., the names, occupations, and places) are camouflaged pronunciation exercises, each identity representing one particular English sound. Hence every time students introduce themselves or their friends, they are working on pronunciation — without knowing it. This renders mechanical repetition unnecessary.

b. The passage cited is presented in the middle of the second week of a second-level course. The four-week first-level suggestopedic course introduces students to 2000 words and the basic grammar structures.

c. Although the vocabulary is very rich, students generally remember this lyrical passage word-for-word weeks later because it is evocative, emotional and aesthetic.

Presentation of text — to classical music!

The students, sitting upright, have now been given a new text (as described above). The teacher turns on a tape recorder that has been set up with classical or romantic period music. Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Chopin are examples.

After the tape has been playing for a few minutes, thus allowing the students to get into the mood of the pleasant, stimulating, and emotionally moving music, the teacher begins to read the text, following the intonations of the music, as if his/her voice were one of the instruments in the orchestra.

This is the main characteristic of the "active concert", so called because the students actively follow the text. The teacher's voice swells in the *crescendos*, diminishes with the *diminuendos*, and sings in the *cantabile* passages.

This active concert, which is the ceremony used to introduce every new lesson throughout the four- or five-week course, generally lasts about 45 minutes. The overall conscious impression the students are left with is one of a solemn and highly artistic event, in which the music and the text blend together harmoniously.

On the level of the imperceptible, however, even more has happened. The spiritually elevating aesthetic experience, during which every utterance was coded with a certain emotional content, has served to inhibit the rational, analytical faculties (generally associated with the left hemisphere of the brain), and activate the creative, artistic, and imaginative functions (usually attributed to the right hemisphere).

Because the course content is emotionally moving the language becomes part of a network of associations based on pleasant feelings, and so gains access to the long-term memory bank.

As new texts are presented, generally speaking, every second day, students have an "active concert" every second day.

Some suggestopedic teachers go directly from the *active concert* into the *passive concert* (described below), while others have a question-and-answer period, or give an explanation of the text, between the two concerts. This phase is often called the "Decoding Session".

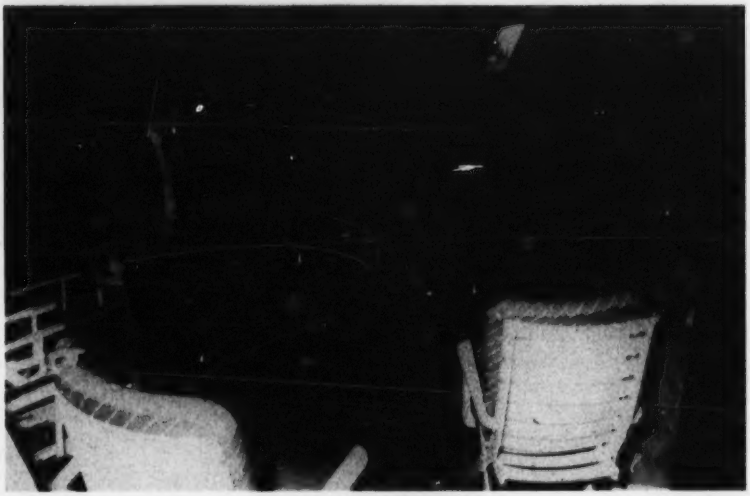
A third possibility is the holding off of the passive concert until the end of the following day so that students have one "concert" every day, rather than two "concerts" on some days and none on others. The advantage of this formula is that *all* lessons end with "concerts", and there is a better balance between active and physically passive phases of the class.

The activation phase

When the students return to class the following day, they have re-read the dialogues at home twice: once the night before, just prior to falling asleep, and once that morning on waking up. These times have been found to be the times of day when receptivity is greatest.

Apart from the last half hour of class time — which I reserve for my *passive concert* — the entire day is devoted to the activation of the text presented the previous day. This activation takes the form of a quick succession of activities and games that are fast-moving, fun, varied, stimulating, and gratifying, where the emphasis is on communication rather than language. They are interspersed with songs and jokes that add to those constant changes in pace that miraculously make time seem to fly.

In a typical activation phase, there are ten to twelve changes in activity — but not in subject matter — an hour. An opening song might lead naturally into a two-minute spontaneous discussion, which in turn might serve as a



pretext for more in-depth pair-work discussions. These might then evolve into new groups of threes where everybody "gossips" about his/her previous partner. This activity might suddenly give way to a ball game (one example

has been given above) that the teacher organizes within seconds; and, in all likelihood, at the end of the ball game the group will break into another song, which the teacher may follow up with two or three relevant jokes that

the students, in twos, will repeat to each other while seated. Before the slower "joke tellers" have finished, the teacher may well be handing out index cards to each student, who must then get up, rush around looking at everyone else's cards and matching up the cards that go together, usually for some grammatical reason.

In fact, all of the activities are grammatically and lexically relevant, but this is rarely brought to the student's attention. S/he is supposed to perceive these activities as plausible extensions of passages in the text, having a *nonlinguistic* raison d'être.

Examples:

a. We sing "Three Blind Mice", because singing together is the nicest way to start the day and *not* because the song contains useful past, present perfect, and stress patterns.

b. We talk about our last weekend, in pairs, because that way we can talk about things that are more personal and *not* to get the pupil-talking-time coefficient to rise.

c. We change groups and gossip about our previous partners so that everybody knows as much as possible about everybody else in the group, and *not* to get practice with the *he* and *she* forms.

d. We play the ball game because after 35 minutes of talking we all feel like a bit of exercise, and *not* because it obliges everyone to answer fast.

In short, the activities are just vehicles to slip in as much unperceived information as possible. They are pretexts for the teacher to convey a stimulating image to the students of what they can become, and they are occasions for students to discover how fast they can learn.

The passive concert

The "activation phase" of the text is followed by the "passive concert" of the same text — "passive" because this time the students will just listen.

The teacher dims the lights or draws the curtains so that the room is subdued and relaxing, with perhaps only a small table lamp on so that the teacher is able to read. The students put their chairs into a reclining position, sit back, and relax.

The teacher turns on the tape recorder that has been set up with baroque music, and lets it play for about five minutes. Under the influence of Bach, Handel, Vivaldi, or one of their contemporaries, the students relax further, *appearing* to be passive. Their breathing and heartbeat slow down, the body temperature drops slightly, and the electrical rhythm of their brain waves changes. For the twenty minutes of the passive concert, the students find themselves in a pleasant intermediate state somewhere between sleep and wakefulness. This state, which Lozanov calls *pseudo-passiveness* is particularly conducive to learning.

After the introductory movement of the music, the teacher begins to read the text with natural intonations, giving every utterance its real mean-

ing. The students are mentally hypersensitive. Their physical energy is being transformed into mental energy, which makes them highly receptive. They are able to absorb much more than when they are physically active.

At the end of the concert (which should be timed perfectly to end at precisely the time the class is scheduled to end) the teacher exits. The students, however, can take an extra few minutes to yawn, stretch, and finally get up. The only guidelines laid down are that students leave the classroom alone, without talking to their classmates, in order to preserve the solemnity of the moment and to allow the text and music to reverberate for as long as possible inside them.

The adaptation phase

The fourth quarter of every lesson differs from the *activation phase* in that the situations, games, and activities here do not stay as close to the actual text. If we regard the activation phase as an exploitation of the text, we can consider the *adaptation phase* an *extrapolation* from the text. Its function is somewhat similar to the "free stage" in Direct Method teaching, i.e., the students use what they have assimilated in concentrically expanding circles of wider and more general contexts.

The following are examples of adaptation-phase activities that put the emphasis on oral comprehension, written comprehension, and written expression, respectively. These "games" are not peculiar to Suggestopedia. They are, however, quick-moving, fun, and communication-oriented and, as a result, they are excellent vehicles for slipping in as much perceived and unperceived information as possible.

a. Oral Comprehension. The whole class listens to a tape, and then breaks up into groups of three or four students per group. Each group receives a bundle of cut-up paragraphs, all of which, together, constitute the entire text just heard. The different groups can put the paragraphs into the right order first. When a group thinks it has won, the teacher replays the tape to check whether the order is right (more hidden oral practice!).

b. Written Comprehension. Each student receives a different newspaper clipping and quickly reads it. Then, in pairs, the students tell their partners about their particular article. The teacher now collects all the articles and puts them down on the ground (or pins them up on a wall). The students then mill about, looking at all the articles to identify which one their partner had.

c. Written Expression. Students must create something in writing based on a situation in the text. This might be an advertisement for a nice restaurant, an exotic tour proposed by a travel agency, a funny newcast, etc.

In addition to the kinds of activities described above, systematic use is made of authentic materials. Examples are menus, tourist guidebooks, road maps, and joke books. Special games requiring these supports are played. Adaptation phases often end with little skits that the students, in groups of two, three, or four, prepare and then perform before the others.

Tests

At the beginning and end of every training session, students take a one-and-a-half-hour test that assesses their levels in oral comprehension, written comprehension, oral expression, and written expression. These tests can be quite conventional; they determine objective levels before and after the course, as well as the progress made during the four or five weeks.

Readers may be surprised that I differentiate between "objective levels" and "progress". In Suggestopedia this distinction is particularly important, as groups are less homogeneous in level than in traditional teaching. Consequently, just as there were differences in level on Day One, so will there be differences at the end of the course. (If this were not the case, the students who were stronger at the outset would have made less progress than those who were weaker, hence not making the most of their time.) The putting together of participants of slightly different levels creates a healthy dynamic within the group, which is favorable to an exchange between its members.

This heterogeneity is beneficial to *all* students. Weaker students almost always have someone stronger to help them out and give them individual attention when the teacher is busy elsewhere, while stronger students, in helping their weaker classmates, are obliged to transform a lot of passive knowledge into active knowledge, thus benefiting from the old principle that "the best way to learn is to teach."

Surprisingly, there is very little misinformation transmitted. The minute there is the slightest shadow of a doubt in the minds of students, they will

automatically check with their more knowledgeable classmates or with the teacher, who is never more than a few feet away.

Apart from the traditional first- and last-day tests described above, regular testing should ideally take place at the end of every lesson. Mini-tests, lasting five to ten minutes, which are easy enough for everyone to do well on, constitute credible reinforcement of what has been learned. Unlike many traditional exams, whose purpose is to "trip up" students, thus identifying for them the weak links in their knowledge, suggestopedic minitests aim at showing students how much they know. Their function as measures of objective evaluation is secondary: their primary usefulness is that of instruments of encouragement that give students tangible proof of how well they have mastered the lesson. As such, they can be great sources of satisfaction, pleasure, and subsequent motivation to the student.

Grammar

After every three lessons a grammar session is slotted in. These sessions are perhaps the only occasions during a training course where students are systematically given grammatical explanations of what they will be practising *before* they actually do it. In reality, however, all the grammar being explained is grammar of which the students already have an intuitive and spontaneous grasp. The purpose of the grammar sessions, then, is to allow them to take cognizance of what they already know.

In some suggestopedic classrooms, the grammar sessions are a kind of interlude in the course. The teacher, in a fairly professorial manner, gives intellectually coherent explanations of the grammatical rules. In other class-

rooms, the grammar sessions resemble activation phases, and are a continuation of the warm, happy, childlike atmosphere that characterizes the rest of the course.

In either case, systematic grammar explanations are followed by activities that are concrete illustrations of these points. The rhythm is: explanation, illustration-game, explanation, illustration-game, etc.

THE TEACHER

Central to the success or failure of accelerated learning is the teacher. The whole suggestopedic system rests on her or him. At the outset s/he is the medium through which everything passes. It is through the teacher's own energy, ability to channel the students' energies, and vision of the staggering possibilities that exist in developing human potential and learning capacities — a vision gained through the teacher's own experience or through the observation of suggestopedic classes conducted by other teachers — that s/he will impart to students an image of what they can become.

The teacher is no mere bearer of knowledge; s/he is the architect of an environment in which students constantly inspire each other through the creativity they share and continually amaze themselves with their newly discovered capacities. The teacher's task is to bring about a tension-free and joyful atmosphere, where everything is taught, simultaneously, in its entirety and in its constituent elements, hence complying with the functioning of our mental processes. As described above, these processes are the result of an inseparable link between the conscious analytical functions of the mind and the unconscious synthetic ones.[6]

The teacher's aim is to bring into existence a "magical" environment a theatre for a new quality of interaction, involving all facets of the students' personality. This new environment is designed to enable students to experience and express their creative curiosity, using this as a healthy driving force to learn and achieve.

The teacher is a *semi-visible* catalyst in the group dynamic in which s/he is the "prime mover"; s/he is "semi-visible" in that the group, highly involved in its own learning process, can never entirely appreciate the role s/he plays nor the extent to which s/he is present. The teacher is continually providing the group with the information and help it requires to go on "independently" with its activities. The teacher must be so much in control of the programme that, outside of the grammar and concert sessions, s/he juggles the material, constantly tailoring it to meet the immediate needs of the group, in

6. Lozanov, *Suggestology and Outlines of Suggestopedy*, p. 256.

the form and in the order the students ask for it. While such flexibility is extremely demanding of the teacher, it is the price to be paid for that all-important and decisive feeling the students have that it is their needs, curiosity, and process of shared discovery that have determined the course of their language-learning experience.

The concomitant, "other side of the coin" impression students are left with is how highly structured and well organized the course must be in order for them to have so much freedom in the class and yet systematically cover all the material necessary to go on to the next dialogue after six hours.

The key to the suggestopedic teacher's role is the suggestopedic teacher's personality. The distant closeness, supportiveness, and authority common to most suggestopedic teachers is somewhat similar to the reassuring professional bedside manner that is the trait of most physicians. Her or his mastery of second-plane, "subliminal communication" is often the result of theatrical training and includes the conscious use of certain voice intonations, rhythm, facial expressions, gestures, and body language, all intended to create a climate of confidence and childlike receptiveness favorable to accelerative learning.

The suggestopedic teacher's role as *initiator or facilitator* is only possible to the extent that s/he conveys to the students that s/he too is in training — constant and permanent training and evolution — and that this is the common bond s/he shares with them.

In this sense the suggestopedic teacher is a woodsman-guide to the mysterious forest of our untapped reserve capacities, charting routes to accelerative learning and long-term memory. S/he is a woodsman-guide in constant awe of Nature, excited by how much s/he still has to learn and by the extent to which s/he will have to adapt to new conditions as new discoveries are made.

The suggestopedic teacher will have a special flair for conveying this love of adventure, change and discovery to students. S/he will furthermore be acutely aware, that above and beyond the subject matter being taught, his or her students are at every moment in time *learning how to learn.* □